

THE LEISURE HOUR.

BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,
AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND.—*Cowper.*



DUKE DOONER AND NEVILLE FAIRBORN.

IDONEA.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I cry my cry in silence and have done:
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good.

—*Tennyson.*

BEFORE the week was out Neville Fairborn was again in his London lodging, listening to Mrs. Keene's account of Madame Ronda and her children.

No. 1502.—OCTOBER 9, 1890.

She told him they had come to her in a cab late one evening, and that, having heard him mention the name, she had taken them in without further reference. Madame Ronda had asked for a double-bedded room for a night or so, and Mrs. Keene had given her a large apartment which happened to be vacant. No mention had been made of Neville, therefore Mrs. Keene did not suppose that Madame Ronda knew that he lodged in the house.

"She could not, for I never gave her my address,"

PRICE ONE PENNY.

said Neville. "What could have brought her here?"

"Chance, or Providence, more properly, for I could not turn her and her children adrift when she was so ill," replied Mrs. Keene.

The fact was that Madame Ronda was seriously indisposed, and Mrs. Keene did not know what to do with her and her children. Of course our philanthropist adopted them at once. He who had been too proud and sensitive to see Idonea and her family again after their silent drive home, or to pay his promised visit to Heronshill, was quite ready to befriend the poor foreigner in whom Idonea was interested. Indeed he was pleased with the thought that Idonea might hear of her friend through Percy, in spite of his indignation at her encouragement of Sir Richard Dyke. Neither Mrs. Keene, nor Madame Ronda, nor even new plans of search for Clarina, could drive that encounter on the Cheviots from his mind, and he even debated with himself as to the propriety of warning Percy. Yet, what did he know of Sir Richard, and what right had he to intermeddle with Idonea's private affairs?

None; therefore when Percy came to see him the following day he was reticent as ever, and spoke more freely and with greater apparent interest of Madame Ronda and her children than of Idonea and her mother.

Madame Ronda had struggled long against poverty and weakness, and had succumbed to them at last. More fortunate than hundreds, nay, thousands of striving artists, she had fallen into kindly hands in her extremity. Mrs. Keene's willing heart and Neville's ready purse were open to her and her children, and they continued unmolested in their one room. The children, accustomed apparently to work and privation, waited assiduously on their mother, while Mrs. Keene and Mary did what they could for the lonely lady. At Neville's instigation a doctor was procured, who said she was suffering, like numbers of her class, more from the effects of want and anxiety than from actual disease.

It was very painful to Mrs. Keene to see the children sit on either side of the patient's bed, watching her; so, whenever Neville was absent and she had herself a few minutes to spare, she sent them down to his rooms, by his permission. He avoided an encounter with them, lest the poor innocents, whom he had once seen, should recognise him.

On these occasions Mrs. Keene generally took their place in the sick-room, and strove to gain the confidence of her lodger while ministering to her needs. But in this she utterly failed. She had never met any one so reticent, yet withal so grateful.

One evening when they were thus alone together, Madame Ronda seemed a little stronger, and Mrs. Keene ventured to ask if she should write to any friend or relative for her.

"I have none but you," she said, feebly; "except, perhaps, one who is far away, and could not come to me if she would. I think—I think—I am now well enough—to—to—be sent to the Union. I have no money—left. The doctor thinks—I may—recover. Then, I will work, and pay you. God bless you, dear, dear Mrs. Keene."

The voice was so broken by sobs that the words were scarcely audible; but Mrs. Keene seized on the one hope held out.

"This friend, Madame Ronda, may I not communicate with her, for your children's sake?"

"The children? Yes. If I live, I will work; if I die, the Union must be to them as father and mother," she said, bitterly—"unless a person should be found who would—I think—take care of them," she added, thoughtfully and with hesitation.

"Give me a clue to her, and I will do my best to find her."

"I cannot. I have lost sight of her for years. Her name is Mrs. Gore. If she were convinced that I, Madame Ronda, was dead, and had left the children to her care, she must take them. If only I could see her I should be glad to leave this wearisome world."

"Is she the friend you alluded to just now?"

"No. She was never my friend. But I freely forgive her what she has done against me. Tell her so if you find her. I will write her a letter when I can. And there is a gentleman to whom I might write. Oh, if Idonea were here!"

"Who?" asked Mrs. Keene, struck with the name.

"My friend. My only friend. But she is far away—in the North. I think I should get well if I were there with her."

Tears rolled slowly down Madame Ronda's face. Her friends were truly few, since she counted Idonea, of whom she knew so little, her best and dearest.

Mrs. Keene had never seen Idonea, and had only heard her casually mentioned by Neville as Miss Umfreville, therefore did not connect her with him. Still, when she next saw Neville she mentioned Madame Ronda's wish.

"She alludes to Mr. Umfreville's sister, whom she met at Mr. Dooner's," he said. "She is not likely to be in London for some months, if at all."

When Percy came, however, he named what the sick woman had said; and Percy communicated it to Idonea when he next wrote to her. He was surprised at receiving an answer from Heronshill. Idonea accounted for her whereabouts by explaining briefly that Lina was again ill, and that Mrs. Dooner had written to Mrs. Umfreville, entreating so humbly for her return to them, that her mother had consented, with the proviso that it was to be only for a visit.

"Still, a visit that I shall duly receive a salary for," wrote Idonea. "I cannot remain at home. We are too poor, and, but for our pride, I could be a more efficient help. As it is, however, Mrs. Dooner offers me treble my original salary if I will remain. You must write to mother and point out the advantages, or, more properly, the necessity, of my doing something. It is feared that Northumberland is too cold for Lina, and she may be ordered to the south coast, or even abroad, which would entail, I suppose, a return to London first. Then, if mother would consent to my continuing with her, I might see Madame Ronda. If we were only better off, I would suggest her coming to us for a change; but I don't see how that can be managed. Indeed, it would be impossible."

In detailing to Neville what Idonea had said concerning Madame Ronda, Percy naturally alluded to his sister's visit to Heronshill.

"Is Sir Richard Dyke there?" asked Neville.

"My sister does not say. Miss Lina Dooner is ill, and she has returned to her for a time. She is placed in a position of some difficulty between Warkworth on one side and Heronshill on the other."

"Humph!" ejaculated Neville. "It seems to me

that women get out of their difficulties by following their inclination, or into them, as Clarina did. I am thinking of putting the following advertisements into the papers:—No. 1. 'If the young lady who left her home in Northumberland on such and such a date will apply so and so, she will hear of something to her advantage.' No. 2. 'If Mrs. Gore, friend of the above, will apply so and so, she will hear of something to her disadvantage.' Query: Would it be to Clarina's advantage to find me? It would certainly be to Mrs. Gore's disadvantage to have two children thrust upon her."

"I am not so sure of that. Children are the roses in the path of life," said Percy.

"With plenty of thorns. You have enough of them in your path, and very wild they are. But what do you say to my advertisements?" returned Neville.

"They can do no harm. But would your sister like it, supposing she came across them? She was of a high, proud spirit."

"She may be changed. There is no understanding the sex. After all, your Miss Stiffens is the paragon; she is constant as the constant pole-star."

"And your Mrs Keene?"

"Too cosmopolitan. A perfect woman must be constant."

"Then I have found the perfection you are still seeking. Miss Stiffens is certainly always in the same point of the heavens—always at home."

"And I dare say she is just as well and happy as those who wander from place to place. Wandering stars and express trains smash into atoms. I wonder whether any *débris* of the trains ever reach the stars, as the wrecks of the stars reach us? I wonder, also, that you let your sister leave home with the example of mine before you. I shall give your address to the disadvantageous advertisement, and mine to the advantageous. I shall not insert them together."

"You will probably have a hundred answers from all sorts of women, whereas I shall have none."

Percy did not understand his friend's mood. He knew him to be peculiar, but he had never before heard him say a word to the disparagement of women, not even of his own sister. Now he spoke as if he had a personal grievance. He was probably getting tired of his knight-errantry, and disgusted by this last episode of Madame Ronda. It certainly was strange that a man who started in life with a dread of the fair sex should be thus thrust into their service, and fighting for them as many nineteenth-century battles as did Don Quixote in his more heroic age.

CHAPTER XXX.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run.

—Keats.

"I CAN neither write nor think. How perplexing life is!" ejaculated Idonea, as she sat before her desk in the library at Heronshill.

She was alone, having remained within doors while the rest of the party were without, to write a letter to Madame Ronda. She had seated herself unconsciously where Neville usually wrote, and her

eyes wandered over the shelves where his forsaken friends, his books, dwelt, now unmolested. It was no wonder that she thought of him. She knew full well that his friendship for her, if he had ever entertained any, had disappeared since their encounter on the Cheviots, and although she trusted to time to disabuse him of his suspicions concerning Sir Richard Dyke, she had not the vanity to suppose that he cared sufficiently for her to render those suspicions important. Yet she was anxious to dispel them, in spite of the pride which whispered that he had no right to entertain them.

Perhaps she was all the more anxious because a new temptation had beset her. It had not to do with Sir Richard, for he had left Heronshill before she consented to visit it, but with Duke Dooner. She could not misunderstand him, though her common-sense led her to believe that his friends would never consent to his actually proposing for her. He had done all but this, in spite of her resolute efforts at discouragement, and the thought would suggest itself, what could she do or say if he actually came to the point? She had already laughed at his compliments, and rebuked him when serious, but she dreaded a further disclosure. Her mother liked him, because he treated her much as if she were a queen, and Idonea was amused to find that even her unyielding parent was not proof against the flattery conveyed by his tacit acknowledgment of the family grandeur. Mrs. Umfreville was, moreover, beginning to feel the unaristocratic weight of straitened means, and Idonea, who had long felt it, had a terror lest she should be asked to lighten it by marriage with one whom she could not love.

"Yet he is good-natured, and has been kind to me," she sighed, as she cast her eyes on her desk and resumed her letter.

It was to Madame Ronda, and was partly due to Lina's overflowing gratitude. No sooner had she learnt that her former instructress was ill and longing to see Idonea than she had asked her mother to offer her an engagement on her recovery. It was this offer, amongst other things, that Idonea was making to Madame Ronda, and in so doing she descanted on the glory of the hills, the freshness of the air, the hues of the moors, and all the delights of her beloved North. Inspired by her theme, she gradually grew poetical, and concluded her letter by an animated description of Heronshill itself, surrounded by autumnal radiance.

Just as she concluded this epistle Duke Dooner came in.

"I am glad to find you alone, Miss Umfreville," he said, laying his hat and riding-whip on the table, and seating himself near her. "You snubbed me the other day, and I vowed to Lina I wouldn't speak to you again. But what does somebody or other say about writing in sand, and that sort of bosh? That's my case, and I can't keep out of your way."

"Still it would be better for me if you would, Mr. Duke," returned Idonea, frankly. "It is my interest to remain here, but your mother and mine have the power of removing me."

"But they won't do it," said Duke, slowly, twisting his moustache into its most delicate point. "I have just come from your mother, who gave me every encouragement."

"What do you mean?" asked Idonea, hastily.

"I never saw such a mother before. If I had said as much to any town dowager as to her, diffi-

culties would have vanished. But when I politely asked her consent, she looked like Queen Elizabeth in the pictures, and said she must communicate with my father, and you must come home."

"How could you?" exclaimed Idonea, in despair.

"Why not? I had only to say there was nothing my father desired more than to see me married to you, and that he held both the reins and purse-strings. Then, not having the Elizabethan ruff, her head bent a little, and she condescended to say that when she had had an interview with my father, and when you were at home, and when the Dooner family generally invited you, and when, in fact, the heavens fell and the larks dropped into our mouths, I might make my proposal. But I can't wait all that time, I have come straight to you, and—"

Here Duke paused and looked at Idonea. Although vain and conceited enough, he knew her now too well to be confident. Lina had also warned him to be careful, for she had advised him sagely in this momentous question. It was she who had urged him to ask Mrs. Umfreville's consent first, and she who had managed this interview.

Idonea was in a strait, and for a moment hesitated as to what she could do or say. But her candid, honourable nature prevailed.

"I am sorry you have done this," she said, gazing out of the window on the golden trees to avoid his eyes. "I do not wish to go home, and yet I cannot stay here under these circumstances."

"I am sure I don't understand you," said Duke, ceasing for a moment to have recourse to the moustache, his usual safety-valve. "What more is necessary than the consent of our respected parents?"

"My own," replied Idonea.

"And can you not give it?" pleaded Duke. "It does not seem so difficult. Mother and the girls don't matter, if that's the obstacle."

He had never realised the possibility of rejection; he came forward in the orthodox way, and he had taken some pains to effect this. He now expected an instantaneous acceptance. He was disappointed, and as he turned in his mind what he could say next, Idonea stopped him.

"If you would kindly let us remain as we were before, it would be best for us all," she said. "At present, Mrs. Dooner and your sisters are very kind to me, and Lina loves me."

Duke answered somewhat huffily. "Why do you persist in snubbing me?" he continued; "you are the queerest, most contradictory girl I ever saw. You say you are poor, and I am rich. Your brothers could come into our bank, or some other appointment, and of course—well, you know—you could do something for your mother and sisters, though she is prouder than my friend the Countess of Starborough. You are aware that I could have her daughter, Lady Alice, for the asking?"

"Then I wish you would; Mrs. Dooner would be delighted, and you know you admire her. Then Lady Alice Dooner sounds so well!"

"Are you laughing at me?" asked Duke, his face flushing; for he was as susceptible as he was irascible.

"No, I am in earnest. I think Lady Alice would suit you much better than I should, and you would secure the joyous consent of your family, Lina, perhaps, excepted. You paid her marked attention."

"Only to annoy you. But I suppose I am the best judge as to the wife I shall choose."

"Certainly, but remember she must also choose you."

"Plenty of girls who would do that," said Duke, in an injured way.

"Of that I am quite sure," rejoined Idonea, who did not wish to annoy him. "Have you seen Lina?"

"Yes. But she isn't one of the girls. I wish you would keep to the point, Idonea. I assure you I am quite in earnest, and don't care if all the old women in London should meet in opposition."

"A parliament of women," laughed Idonea.

But Duke was not to be turned from his theme, and she saw that he was angry. She had been witness of many passionate bursts of temper, and dreaded an outbreak.

"Let us both think it over for a week," she said, quietly. "You have taken me by surprise, and I dare say I may seem hasty, or—or—unkind."

Saying this, Idonea rose. She had done so more than once before under circumstances something similar, so Duke was more annoyed than surprised. Now she vanished through the open window, near which the writing-table was placed. She went down a side path leading to some shrubberies, which she had previously explored, and which she reached, as she believed, unperceived by him. The tortuous path led into a bridle-road not visible from the house, and here she paused to avoid observation and to collect her thoughts. She stood a moment to gaze on her beloved moorland and purpling hills, concealed, as she fancied, by the tall shrubs and over-arching trees.

"I will go home and starve with them!" she thought. "Poverty and pure air are preferable to riches and smoke; and we must soon be in London again, if I remain. I cannot marry Duke Dooner, even should his mother ask me."

"Miss Umfreville!" said a well-known voice, and a horse was pulled up before her.

The rider was Neville Fairborn, who dismounted, and quietly, if coldly, explained his unexpected appearance. Idonea flushed red as the flushing autumnal tints of the trees that surrounded her; but she overcame all emotion as she gave him frankly her hand, and said,

"This is a pleasant surprise, Mr. Fairborn! How is Percy, and how is Madame Ronda, and when did you leave town?"

Neville was more embarrassed than she as he replied,

"I left your brother quite well. Madame Ronda is still very ill; worse, we fear. I hear from Mr. Timmins that there is a hitch in the sale of Heronshill, and I am come to see about it."

"You surely do not mean to sell it!" exclaimed Idonea. "How could you part with such a lovely place in such a dear country?"

"I had resolved to do so after I saw you last," said Neville; and Idonea fancied there was something personal to her in the words. "Now," he added, "I hear that my little friend, Miss Lina, cannot live here."

"It is too bleak for her, and I am almost glad. None but a Fairborn should live at Heronshill," returned Idonea, with animation. "Is not the North-country name identical with the place, almost as much as Percy is with Alnwick and Warkworth?"

Neville smiled.

"And Umfreville? That is an older name still?"

he said, once more thawing beneath her true-heartedness.

"Ah! but an old name without land is like a king without his crown. The Umfreville has abdicated."

Just as Idonea said this, with a bright smile and a frank look from the clear hazel eyes into Neville's grey orbs, a voice again sounded. This time it was Duke Dooner's.

"I have caught you at last, Miss Doe," he said, angrily, coming upon her from behind.

"Here is Mr. Fairborn," she said, turning suddenly towards him with a warning glance.

After the gentlemen had shaken hands the business

that had brought Neville north was at once mentioned, and Idonea said she would return to the house by the shrubbery, while they went round by the drive.

"Good-bye, if I do not see you again," she said, holding out her hand to Neville. "I have just written to Madame Ronda. Mrs. Dooner has kindly asked her to come here and stay until they leave Heronshill."

"I am afraid she will never get so far. The doctor fears she will not recover," replied Neville. And Idonea's bright smile faded as she retraced her steps to the house.

CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS.

I PROPOSE in the present paper to follow an imaginary Chinaman from the cradle to the grave, and note a few of the superstitions by which he is bound.

First, let us note one which pervades his whole life, and influences not here and there one and another, but every individual in China—namely, *the observance of days*. Every family possesses an almanack in which lucky and unlucky days are clearly notified, and out of the 365 days of the year, 180 are pronounced unlucky. Considering the number of children who come into the world on these days, it is no wonder that so many of the Chinese are unlucky, and it must be a cause of grief to them that they cannot choose their birthday for themselves. Yet, on asking my teacher and others whether the fact of a child being born on an unlucky day weighed much on the minds of the parents, or of the individual on coming to years of discretion, I was told that there are unlucky hours as well as days, and that the hour has more to do in determining the destiny of a man than the day. Moreover, it is sagely conceded that a man of real good fortune will triumph over all obstacles, and rise above the influences of bad days and bad hours. In the busy life of us Western people, it would be no small cause of annoyance to be hampered perpetually by this system of good and bad days. Imagine every schoolboy or girl waiting for a lucky day to begin studying. Imagine a long-planned excursion falling on a day when the rain descends in torrents; it cannot be deferred because *that* is a lucky day, and the next two or three in the calendar are the reverse. Think of 180 days in the year on which you must neither travel, learn, nor marry! Endeavouring to trace the origin of this superstition, we come to the *stars*. If good stars preponderate, the day is lucky; if bad stars are in the ascendant, the day is unlucky. There seems to be some affinity here to Western ideas.

We will now suppose ourselves in a home where a new little life has been added to the household. The first question asked in Eastern and Western lands is, I suppose, the same—"Boy or girl?" But the answer is received with widely different feelings. In China, if it is a *boy*, it is all joy, all gladness, all congratulation. A *girl*—oh! the different tone. From her birth she is looked upon as an outsider, one who belongs to another family, since marriage is a certainty to every Chinese girl. *She* will not

keep up the family line, and, foremost thought, she will not feed the spirits of her deceased father and mother.

Here is the first glimpse of a superstition which is holding captive its millions in China. Three times a year at least the spirits of parents and ancestors must be propitiated and honoured by a feast. The table is spread, candles are lighted, crackers fired, and gongs beaten, and when the spirits have taken their fill the family feed themselves. To us it seems the merest child's play, reminding one continually of dolls' feasts, at which each delicacy in succession is lifted to the wax lips of dainty lifeless guests, and disappears down the living throat of the baby entertainer. And yet this empty ceremony has a hold upon the countless myriads of the Chinese Empire which baffles all arguments, resists all persuasion, and constitutes one of the strongest obstacles in the way of the Gospel. Hence the Chinaman's intense desire for male children. In the country a congratulatory epithet for a son is *Kang-voen-ü*—i.e., Lord of the Spirit Feasts; one who will regulate the funeral rites of his parents, and thrice a year summon the disembodied spirits to a feast of savoury smells. Those who have worked among the Chinese know the hold which this superstition has upon them. Again and again have we heard them say that it is an easy matter to leave off the worship of idols, but it is *impossible* to give up the feasts for the dead. Both men and women assure us that but for this the number of converts to Christianity might at once be greatly multiplied.

To avoid, then, the gloomy sight of an unwelcome baby, let us suppose ourselves in a house where a son has been born. The father and mother are happy, and the neighbours congratulatory. We are surprised at the marked absence of elder women in the house, all the neighbours who enter the room are young women, and on inquiry we find that all who enter are supposed to contract defilement. The King of Tartarus would make them wander many a weary year in the dark, as in a labyrinth, without a clue or a guide.

The first interesting fact communicated to me respecting infant life is that the first drop of milk given to the baby must be brought from another home, the mother of a *girl* supplying the nourishment for a *boy*, the mother of a *boy* that for a *girl*. For this custom, there seems little reason to be given.

On the third day takes place the first idolatrous ceremony. A feast is made to the "Zōng-kong zōng-bo," a phrase difficult to translate, because conveying what is even to a Chinaman a very indefinite idea, but which seems to mean a pair of gods, or rather a god and goddess, who reside in the bed and look after the children, teaching them to talk and laugh in their sleep. Two large and ten small bowls of rice and some bean curd are offered, candles lit, incense and gold paper burned. The idea connected with this feast is that a multitude of spirits have congregated, waiting for a chance of inhabiting a human frame, and as only one can enter the child, this feast is to conciliate the unsuccessful candidates, and induce them to disperse quickly in quest of another abode. Happy thought this for the mother! The soul of the child to whom she has given birth is no new gift fresh from the Creator's hands, but a spirit which may have inhabited any animal or any number of animals in succession, and which has, through fidelity or some other brute virtue, obtained the honour of occupying a human body. The *large* bowls of rice are presented (after the gods) to female neighbours who have not been blessed with children, it being believed that partaking of them will ensure this happy result. The *small* bowls are divided among the neighbouring children with a view to securing friendly feeling and harmony between the little stranger and his neighbours.

The next event of importance in the life of a Chinaman is the shaving the head for the first time, at the expiration of a month. Though unable to choose a lucky day for the birth, the almanack comes in here, and a lucky day as near as possible to that day month is selected. A long silken thread is placed round the baby's neck during the operation, expressive of long life. It is at this time that the silver circlet so often seen round boys' necks is put on. It is supposed to act as a charm, and is never taken off until the age of sixteen.

Among the poor the circlet is replaced by one of silk, the money for which is begged from friends, and on the supposition that a hundred families contribute to its purchase, is called the "hundred family thread." It is chiefly used by parents who have lost several children, and who earnestly desire to preserve the life of this child. A feast is offered also to the god of tranquillity.

The next great day in the young life is the first birthday. The festivities, of course, vary in different places. At Hangchow the feast is kept in a very lively manner. Miniature tools belonging to the four orders of literates, husbandmen, artisans, and traders are placed on the table before the baby, and whichever he first takes up is supposed to indicate the line he will pursue in after life. If he seizes a pen he is a born writer; if he grasps a plough he will probably follow one. This feast is of course accompanied by a feast for the spirits of the ancestors, and if the child should not be well, a small measure of rice is placed on his head and various prayers said over it; the rice, being a *good* thing, is supposed to disperse the bad influences at work on the child. At the critical ages of three, six, and nine years, the priests are called to chant prayers, and they make a cock pass seven times through a tub without a bottom, then the child will pass safely through all the dangers of infancy. My teacher assures me that five out of every ten families yield to this superstitious practice, and that the priests pocket each time from four to five hundred

cash. If this be so we can understand that the rearing of cocks is remunerative in China. Should sickness come the idols are often consulted, lots cast for prescriptions, vows offered, and not unfrequently persons will profess themselves criminals in the sight of the gods, and vow to wear the scarlet clothes of a convict, and have their hands manacled three times for three years.

We come now to the period of marriage, which occurs early in China, and here come restrictions which astonish the stranger. Two persons no nearer related to each other than any other descendants of Shem, Ham, or Japhet, if they bear the same surname, must not marry. The years, months, days, and hours of their respective births must be compared, and should they be unfavourable to union, the marriage must not take place. There is no limit as to the difference in age, but it is considered very fortunate to have one year apart, two years is not bad, three is only indifferently good, but *six* years' difference is sure to result in misfortunes. Every one in China has the sign of some animal, or rather of one out of twelve animals, determined by the year of birth. These are a mouse, a cow, tiger, rabbit, serpent, horse, sheep, monkey, dragon, fowl, dog, and pig. The horse and mouse, the cow and sheep, the tiger and monkey, the dragon and dog, the serpent and pig, the rabbit and fowl, may on no account intermarry; on the other hand, the union of the mouse and cow, the horse and sheep, the tiger and rabbit, monkey and fowl, dragon and serpent, the dog and pig, are all permissible. The name and sign of the young lady desired are written upon a slip of paper and placed before the kitchen god in the proposed husband's family. If no quarrel takes place in the household, and no breakage of crockery or other valuables occurs during the next three days, the union is regarded as fortunate, and negotiations may proceed, unless, indeed, the family, to secure additional security, consult also a blind fortune-teller. Supposing, however, that all is favourable, the day chosen, the presents given and received, and the auspicious morning arrived, priests begin at about 2 a.m. in the bridegroom's house to recite prayers entreating the presence of all the gods. In the lady's home, on the previous day, a feast has been held and offered, first to the gods, or spirits, who generally content themselves with the odour of the viands. The bridal chair is at the bridegroom's house overnight, and a pair of small candles are lighted in it; when carried through the streets it is considered unlucky for any one to stand in front and look in. The bride is not allowed to touch the ground in going to the chair; a brother carries her from her room to the chair itself, or else the way is strewn with rice bags for her to step on. Why? Lest she should carry away on the sole of her shoe the luck of her mother's house! In the bridal chamber two large candles are lighted, which are on no account to be *put* out, they must burn out, and it is considered a good omen if they go out together. Husband and wife will then live many years together, and one will not long survive the other. If, on the contrary, one candle is soon extinguished, it is looked upon as a sure sign that one is doomed to early death, and the other to a long widowhood.

During life the men in China pay as a rule but small attention to religion of any kind. The *litterati* worship Confucius once in their lives, and once a year the deity who presides over essays; the head of each

family worships heaven and earth at the close of the year; those employed in trade worship the god of wealth once a year; husbandmen worship one great king of the fields; fishermen a goddess who when a mortal woman threw herself into the sea to save her father was drowned with him, and therefore deified; doctors worship once a year an Esculapius of their own; carpenters worship once a year a master workman to whom they do not even give the title of god.

To this routine there are exceptions. Thus I met one man who said he daily worshipped three deities. He worshipped heaven for his being, the kitchen god for his food, and the god of wealth for prosperity in his business. Woman, being the weaker vessel, is of course more superstitious. The kitchen god is attended to by her; the feasts for the spirits are spread by her; vegetarians are chiefly, though not exclusively, women; the god of thunder has comparatively few male votaries, but at least eight out of every ten women worship him. But in the presence of death the distinction drops; husband and wife, son and daughter, alike worship the departed spirit. And it is in the matter of the graves that the superstition known as "fong-shü" (wind and water influences) comes into fullest play. We are, I believe, quite as much alive as the Chinese to the benefits of a south wind and running water; we are glad to have houses built high and dry, facing the south and shutting the bleak north wind out. But here again the Chinese ideas are quite different. It is with regard to the homes of the dead rather than the living that this superstition of the "wind and water" has to do. Let a grave be made for the head of a family in a desirable locality, that is on a hillside facing south, and with a pure stream flowing round it, and his living descendants shall reap the benefit though they should reside in a hovel on a marshy plain facing the north. The south is the region from which all good influences come; the south governs life, the north is the source of all evil, the ruler of death. Hence the beneficent influences of the south must on no account be shut out, no obstacle must interfere with them, and on the north a barrier should be erected to keep in these favourable influences. It is needless to dwell upon the ramifications of this superstition, but it accounts for many inconveniences. It is a fruitful parent of

those provokingly low bridges which bring your boat to a standstill after a day or two of heavy rain on many of the canals round Ningpo. One such low bridge has made a prisoner of me more than once, and on inquiring whether, if I paid all expenses, I might have it raised, I was told, "Certainly not, not for £2,000; the luck of the place would be gone." Travellers have wondered at the islands in some of the canals.

"A small green isle, it seemed no more,
Scarce wider than my dungeon floor;
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the southern breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing."

How did it come there, a hindrance to navigation? It is made on purpose to secure the luck of some grave near by; or to shut in the luck of some village which would otherwise depart. The one redeeming point with regard to this superstition is the preservation of what few fine trees are allowed to grow in China. I have been assured by natives competent to say that were it not for this there would be no large trees at all.

Then, lastly, as to funerals. All who are engaged in missionary work have seen with regret the amount of money spent on them. The poor will pay so much for the burial of their parents that they are in debt for years afterwards. No matter how the living may suffer with cold, the senseless corpse must be well wrapped up in many garments. The living children may have to beg, but the dead parents must be supplied with paper money to pay their way in the land of ghosts, and secure a little respect from the gaoles in the other world. Twice a year at least a feast must be spread for them, and a little money given for the year's expenses.

And now how shall we help the Chinese to throw off the shackles with which ignorance and superstition have bound them? Education may achieve something, and the gradual association with Western ideas; but for them, as for all men, there is but one answer: "The Truth shall make you free"—the Truth as unveiled in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

M. L.

EXCURSIONS INTO THE CEVENNES.

II.

THE district of the Cevennes may be said to be by far the most Protestant in France. To compare it with the rest of the country, one would say it is the only really Protestant portion of France. If we take the Rhone from Valence to the sea for a boundary on the east, and another line from Valence to Millau, St. Affrique, and round by Béziers to the Mediterranean we shall have a tract of country which contains two-fifths of the members of the Reformed Church of France. It is just here, too, that all the Free Protestant Churches are best represented. Many of its towns and villages have not only a Free Church, but a Methodist Church, and in some nearly all the Pro-

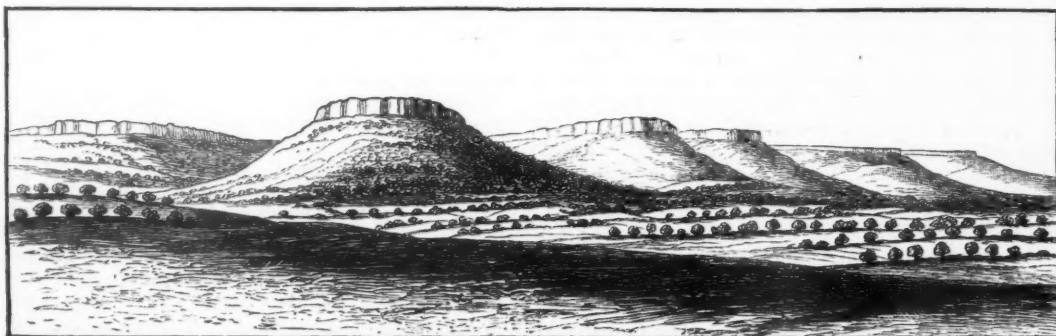
testant sects known in France are to be found. The Cevennes is one of the four districts into which the "Eglise Evangélique Methodiste" is divided. Out of the forty-three Free Churches of the "Union Evangélique" we find ten in the Cevennes, one of the most important being a Baptist Church, that of St. Jean du Gard.

It is in this district of the Cevennes, of which Nîmes is the leading ecclesiastical centre, that all questions affecting Protestantism are most ardently debated; and if it were not for the schism between the Orthodox and the Liberal party, Cevennot Protestantism would be so overwhelmingly influential

that other departments of France would have to follow in its wake.

One would suppose that in this district, the very stronghold of Protestantism from the earliest ages down to the present day, Roman Catholicism would be at a discount, and yet, strange to say, it is just the opposite. As a matter of fact, the departments in which the Cevennes lie—Ardèche, Lozère, Gard, Aveyron, and Hérault, are among the most Catholic in France. From the interesting pamphlet of the Abbé Bougaud, "Le Grand Péril de l'Eglise de France," we find that whereas, in the year 1877, there was an average of eighty-three cures wanting priests in each of the three departments in the neighbourhood of Paris, the average did not amount to one cure vacant in each of the five Cevennol dioceses answering to the five departments just named. Of course there may be other circumstances that might tend to lessen this enormous disparity, but it

Gallargues there are some fine ruins of the old Roman bridge of Ambrusium. Although it was still April when I set out, it proved the hottest ride I ever had. The train was ascending all the way, and went painfully slow. Great rocks were scattered about everywhere, with earth between them and trees growing out of the earth. The rocks were the colour of bad coal burnt white. As we got up higher, both country and buildings, when the latter were to be seen, had a more picturesque appearance. We stopped at every station: at Aubaix, a small place, with a Protestant population of 600; at Sommières, a more important place, where the Protestants number as many as 2,725; at Quissac and Sauve, both Protestant centres of importance. Notwithstanding the intense heat of the summers, these towns are occupied by a very active and business-like population. Their principal industries are the manufactures of stuffs, silks, woollen and cotton



TERMINATIONS OF THE PLATFORM OF THE COIRON, ARDÈCHE.

From Scrope's "Central France."

may be safely inferred that the Cevennes district is intensely more Catholic than the neighbourhood of Paris, probably only second in religious fervour to Brittany.

Whether we start on our second excursion from Nîmes, Béziers, or Montpellier, we must in any case arrive at Lunel, and from there go on a branch line into the mountains. Lunel is a town of more than 7,000 inhabitants, with between 500 and 600 Protestants. They have an association amongst themselves, worthy of imitation, and possessing a certain Scriptural sanction, since it recalls the devout men who carried Stephen to his burial, and the young men who took up the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, and carried them out and buried them. The society is called "Association fraternelle d'hommes pour les convoies funèbres."

Gallargues, the first station after Lunel, is a large, featureless, stone village among small hills, terraced and planted with olives. It is a thoroughly Protestant place, containing 1,562 Protestants, with a Sunday-school of more than 200 children. There is a curious industry carried on between Gallargues and Holland, probably the result of correspondence between the Protestant exiles and their friends. It consists in the manufacture of the cloths with which Dutch cheeses are covered. Until the discovery of aniline, these cloths passed through a very unpleasant process to make them fit for the purpose. Near

goods. The greatest possible calamity has befallen the whole of the district by the invasion of the phylloxera, which has so destroyed the vine, that in many places the old roots have had to be burnt.

St. Hippolyte-le-Fort, the first town at which we alight, is surrounded by a really grand country. It has the character of a mediæval town, a mere congeries of alleys without any street worthy the name. The houses are dark and tall, and, judging from their exterior, no one could have the least idea of the comfortable homes inside. When we were led down one of these narrow lanes, by our guide, to the house of the *pasteur* to whom we had an introduction, we could hardly believe it possible that he could live in such a place, but, the door once passed, we found ourselves in a commodious house with a large garden, the interior being reached through two stone halls, one of which was adorned with orange and lemon trees.

St. Hippolyte is quite a *chef-lieu* of Protestantism. The town itself contains 3,000 Protestants, the Catholics only numbering 2,000; consequently, the municipal council is in the hands of the former. There is a large Protestant temple here, built in 1822, capable of holding 3,000 persons. There are three *pasteurs*, and at times St. Hippolyte has enjoyed the services of some of the most distinguished ministers in the French Church, as, for instance, Adolphe Monod and Athanase Coquerel senior.

In old times the Protestants were compelled to worship outside the walls, the town being fortified, and a fort was built by Vauban in 1688 to overawe them. In this fort a certain *pasteur* of the desert, Paul Dalgne, 1743, was imprisoned thirteen years. His successors are constantly reminded of the happier times in which they live by the key of their temple, which is made out of one of the hinges of the gate of the fort, while the bell which summons them to service is the very one which their fathers used, and which, taken from them in 1686, and used for nearly 200 years as the bell of the town-hall, was returned

a great golden flower all over the rocks, beautiful butterflies, and a lizard basking on a hot bit of stone. These lizards of the Cevennes are often large, of a green colour, and very beautiful.

I slept at the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, and in the morning was requested to attend prayers with the children. I had the pleasure of hearing some of these deaf mutes examined in geography, and they answered the questions of their teacher in a loud voice and quite correctly. One repeated the Lord's Prayer. The other day I read in "L'Eglise Libre" an account of a visit which M. Paul Bouvier, the di-



THE GROTTO OF THE FAIRIES, STALACTITE CAVERN IN THE CEVENNES.

to them in 1840. The *pasteur*, whose generous hospitality I enjoyed, showed me some interesting documents of the Dragonnades. They were dated 1684, and were orders of the Governor of St. Hippolyte billeting soldiers on some of the principal inhabitants. He also put into my hands the Bible of Paul Dalgne. It was interesting to notice that the pages most thumbed were the 17th and 18th chapters of the First Book of Kings—the history of Elijah's wanderings in the desert, and his triumphs over the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. A walk which I took in the neighbourhood of St. Hippolyte gave me a very happy idea of the scenery of this part of the Cevennes. It recalled the Yorkshire dales: winding valleys, flanked by lofty hills scarped and peaked, the distance filled in by other hills, while beneath my feet was the bed of a mountain stream, almost dry, crossed by most picturesque bridges. I noticed

rector, paid to Nice with two of his pupils. These two deaf children, once quite dumb, read, wrote from dictation, and analysed words simply by watching the lips of their teachers. One of them recited the fable of the Grasshopper and the Ant, the other did a sum in the rule-of-three on a black-board. Both answered questions in arithmetic and geography. This was one of a series of journeys M. Bouvier made on behalf of his beneficent work. They overtaxed his strength, and in September, 1879, he died. No one could have seen him in the midst of his pupils and not have been sure that devotion to the deaf and dumb was the passion of his life. It is the sole Protestant asylum of the kind in France.

When I was in the house there must have been about fifty children, boys and girls, under its roof, but they were erecting a more commodious building outside the town, capable of holding one hundred. There

appear to be about 1,000 such unfortunate children in France, of Protestant birth, and of these about 120 or 130 would be eligible according to the rules of the institution. They all receive elementary education, while the boys are taught in addition some trade, and the girls to sew, to get up linen, and general domestic duties, the great object being to render the pupils useful members of society. If weakly, they are sent to the Protestant Bathing Establishment of Grace-du-Roi. Parents or friends pay where they can, but more than three-fourths of the expenses are defrayed by public charity. M. Bouvier has been succeeded in his arduous office by M. E. Rayroux, one of the *pasteurs* of St. Hippolyte.

The remainder of the railway journey was deeply interesting, the line emerging from short tunnels into natural amphitheatres, grander than any the Romans ever dreamt of. The rocky sides of these mountains are almost bare, and, seen so close, appear of great height. There is something truly savage and austere about the scenery, well entitling it to be called "The Desert." Some mulberry-trees appear in the plain below, but no cattle are to be seen, and the river-beds, even thus early in the year, were almost dry.

Ganges, situated in one of these great limestone amphitheatres, is an important place in every way, whether we look at it from a picturesque, an industrial, or a religious point of view.

It is at Ganges that the Hérault enters the department, and from the town itself to the point where its tributary, the Ergue, falls into it, the gorges of the Hérault afford a succession of magnificent views and wonderful natural phenomena: marvellous caverns, realising all the dreams of fairyland, ancient beds of subterranean streams opening out of the sides of the rocks, abundant springs rushing up from grottoes, to be lost in the river; elsewhere its waters themselves go pouring down in underground channels, while in some of the tangled defiles huge rocks have fallen and have formed natural bridges, beneath which the river flows on in ever-changing mood.

By the kindness of one of the *pasteurs* of Ganges, I was taken up a gorge of the Vis, to see the Cavern of the Camisards and the Chateau of Ganges.

It would have been preferable to have walked, but as we had ladies with us we went in two small omnibuses. Disagreeable as was the jolting, and still more the effort of sitting inside a low-roofed little omnibus while passing through such scenery, we saw more than enough to recompense us for such drawbacks. The weather was glorious, and, as there had been a good deal of rain the day before, the cascades came dashing over the rocks in fine style. Our bourne was an old chateau of the sixteenth century, belonging to a Legitimist nobleman who wished to let it. It was situated in a most romantic valley, and is just the place, with its dingy, aristocratic rooms, its old-fashioned furniture and family portraits, its terraces and gardens, bathed by the mountain river, for an artist or a novel writer. Returning we rode through a Cevennol village; the street, hardly wide enough for our small vehicles to pass, was lined on both sides with immensely high, dark, squalid-looking houses.

Of course all the women and children turned out at the clatter, and we stopped in a little square. Alighting we formed a long procession *en queue* to visit the *pasteur* of the place. This ceremonial over we drove on to the Cave of the Camisards, but it

proved impracticable to enter, it being no longer considered safe. The cavern stretches many roods under the mountain and has other exits. With such places this singular region abounds, awe-striking spots from which ordinary humanity shrinks with alarm, but which had no terrors for men and women who so lived with God as to be able to say with joy: "The darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there . . . even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

About six or seven miles from Ganges, at about a quarter of a mile from St. Bauzile, the Hérault falls between some rocks. Not far off, in a wild and picturesque spot, is the entrance to the famous stalactite caverns, called "Baouma de las Doumaiselas." This uncouth-looking name, which means "Grotto of the Fairies," is said to have its origin in the terror with which certain wild Camisards, who had taken refuge here, inspired the neighbourhood. Driven to bay by the atrocious cruelty of their rulers, they had dwelt in these weird regions until they had become ferocious in look and manners, so that the ignorant and superstitious peasantry easily imagined them inhabitants of a nether world. From the difficulty we have had in meeting with any account of the interior of these grottoes, it would appear that few persons have ever visited them.

Renaud de Vilback's "Voyages en Languedoc" contains the only one we know of, and as we have no reason to doubt its faithfulness, we give it considerably abbreviated. This singular absence of information would appear to arise from the dangers of the descent, which are considerable, and greatest where the caverns are finest. On entering, the narrator found himself in a funnel-shaped apartment, and keeping hold of a cord which was fastened along the rock, he came to a place where there was a rope ladder. This descended, he found himself in the first hall; before him was a line of pillars about thirty feet in height, and shaped like palm-trees, forming magnificent galleries. The second hall was reached by a very narrow way, which could only be passed by pushing the body sideways.

This hall proved immense. Looking to the left, the visitor saw what looked like an enormous curtain sprinkled with brilliants, and draped gracefully, so that its ends just touched the ground. Turning round, he beheld petrified cascades, some yellow, some white as enamel, columns of various shapes and colours, some truncated, others taking the form of tall obelisks, some transparent as glass, others white as alabaster. Crystals, diamonds, porcelain, and a collection of things rare, beautiful, and strange, bewildered his eyes, recalling the enchanted ground of fairyland.

Continuing the exploration to the left, he passed into a third hall, moderately wide and very long, shaped like a winding gallery. After walking along it for a considerable time, the way out was through a low vault, so low that it had to be passed bending down. It was called the "oven," and the stalactites here looked like small white peas or sugar-plums, of all kinds and shapes.

Leaving to the right a second oven-like chamber, he entered a rather large hall, where everything seemed in confusion. Nature here seemed to have suffered a convulsion, for the rocks hung pitched about and broken in a sad and dismal fashion. Then

through a narrow passage, only to be ascended crawling, he came to a small chamber, capable of holding about twelve persons. Here he found a prodigious quantity of bats clinging to the walls and roof. Against the rocks were crystallisations taking the form of plants, white and sparkling, and contrasting marvellously with the intense black all around. This last hall opens on the first, and his eye, now accustomed to the darkness, was able to realise the tremendous heights and depths of this wonderful place. To get out there was no way but by ascending a perpendicular rock up a rope ladder, fifty feet in height. It was possible to make a descent lower down, for the ladder fastened on to a stalactite, and hung down among the precipices below. He watched a brave Cevennot peasant descend; after a short time he was invisible, and the time he took appeared very long. He descended himself, and

found, after twenty feet, the ladder simply hung from the rock. All around him were stalactites of dazzling whiteness, and the profound silence was only broken by the noise of stones falling occasionally from rock to rock. The oppressive solitude drove him back, and he reascended without penetrating the depths of this awful recess of nature.

There is another grotto in the neighbourhood, where are other stalactitic wonders. Amongst the many beautiful crystal forms to be seen there, one is a mass resembling an altar of porcelain, three feet high, of an oval shape, its table shining like enamel, and formed of layers resembling the leaves of an artichoke. There is also a hall as large as half the town of Ganges, containing an obelisk as high as a belfry, red in colour, and perfectly round; but the chief marvel of all is a mass resembling the statues of a woman and two children on a pedestal.

CURIOSITIES OF COMMERCE AND TRADE.

THE MILK TRADE.

A VERY few years ago there would have been very little of the curious that could have been said about the milk trade. Wherever milk was in demand cows were fed, and their produce purveyed by milkmaids—who, by the way, formerly held festival on May Day, just as the sweeps in many parts do now—or of course people who wished to be sure of the genuine article might fetch their milk direct from the cow, as Stowe tells us he did. "Near to the abbey" (the abbey of St. Clair), he says, "was sometime a farm, at which I myself in my youth have fetched many a halfpenny-worth of milk, and never had less than three ale pints for a halfpenny in the summer, nor less than one ale quart for a halfpenny in the winter, always hot from the kine as the same was milked and strained. One Trollop," he adds, "and afterwards Goodman, were farmers there, and had thirty or forty kine." That was on the spot known now to East Londoners as Goodman's Fields. One may still find cows in the neighbourhood, though the "fields," alas! are a long way off—even more remote from the cows than a ha'penny would now be from the full price of "three ale pints" of new milk. Even where everything else has remained pretty much as it was in those times, prices have not failed to move onward with the times.

There is a curious little corner of St. James's Park, a genuine little bit of the old world, where one may see the cows tethered up under the trees, and seats for the company to sit and drink their milk just as they were wont to do when Stowe went to Goodman's Fields. The animals here, and the rude stalls and benches just under the windows of the mansions overlooking the park, are barricaded against the stream of time by a royal privilege granted to the gatekeepers, who are thus able to maintain their little "milk fair," an odd little relic of times when cows were not far from every man's door, when "lactometers," and most other "ometers" were unknown, and when the idea of bringing milk from Wiltshire and Gloucestershire for use in London would have been received as a capital joke.

There was not much to be said about the milk

trade in those days or in any other days till quite recently. Not even the curiosities of adulteration would have afforded much that was noteworthy. We have most of us heard about the admixture of milk with chalk, mucilage, sheep's brains, sugar, and so forth, and there may have been here and there such adulterants employed, but those who are likely to know best consider such stories in a general way as mere fabrications. The truth is that the most unscrupulous of dairymen finds water about all he can reasonably desire for adulterating purposes, and although a little colouring matter may occasionally have been added where the "sky-blue" has looked a little too pronounced to pass muster, probably if the truth were known such cases have always been far less frequent than sensational newspaper articles have sometimes led the public to believe. "The only abnormal solid matters I have ever known added to milk," says one respectable authority on the subject, "have been small quantities of carbonate of soda and nitrate of potash, the former of which is used to prevent milk turning sour, and the latter to remove from the milk the peculiar taste imparted to it by certain kinds of food given to the cows. Both these salts are perfectly harmless," he adds, "even though added in very much larger quantity than they are ever likely to be"—an assertion, by the way, which, in the case of young children, at least, should be received with considerable caution.

Even in adulteration, then, the milk trade, until a few years ago, had probably undergone no very great change since Cæsar came over here and found that the people lived on milk and meat—"lacte et carne vivunt," he says. The greater the number of people gathered together in any town, the greater the number of cows that had to be gathered there too, and with the exception of our large cities, that of course still continues to be the arrangement, with one or two modifications. The most important of these modifications was the introduction of condensed milk.

During the siege of Paris a French chemist is said to have conceived the idea of manufacturing milk, and subsequently carried his idea into practice, laying

before the Academie des Sciences a very respectable artificial substitute for the natural article, but so far as we know the idea has had no commercial importance. Dried milk, or, as it is usually styled, "desiccated milk," again, was a novelty introduced some years ago, and it has, we believe, been extensively used in the navy and on shipboard generally, but it can hardly be reckoned as a feature of the ordinary milk trade.

The condensed milk is, however, another matter, and during the past few years must have exerted a very considerable influence on the trade. The notion originated with Mr. Gail Borden, of New York, in 1849, and the first tin of condensed milk was among the curiosities of our Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in 1851. The preparation received a medal, and the inventor at once set up factories and proceeded to turn out the article in considerable quantities. Latterly it has made its way into the English market, which is now supplied by three companies, one from Switzerland, another in Ireland, and a third having its headquarters at Aylesbury. The process of condensation is identical in each, and, according to those who have visited the different factories, a scrupulous regard to order and cleanliness is characteristic of them all. The Swiss appears to be the largest. The factory is situate at Lake Zugg, near Zurich. The milk is brought into the factory on men's shoulders, and poured into a large reservoir, some 750 or 1,000 gallons being operated upon at one time. From this reservoir it passes through a strainer designed to intercept anything in the nature of impurity, such as hair from the cattle, and so forth. From the strainer it is passed into a tank heated with hot water so as to keep it up to a certain temperature, and in this tank sugar is added to the extent of about a third of the total weight of milk. The Swiss company use beet sugar for this purpose. At Aylesbury, we believe, cane sugar is employed. All the companies state emphatically—and we believe analysis has borne out the statement—that nothing else of any kind is added to the milk, to which nothing now remains to be done but to evaporate the greater part of the water which constitutes it. This might be done by putting the milk into a boiler and allowing the water to go off in steam in the ordinary way; but instead of this it is put into "vacuum pans," in which precisely the same process goes on, only the steam goes off at a much lower temperature than in an open vessel. The "vacuum pan," it should be explained, is merely an air-tight boiler from which, by means of a pump, the air may be exhausted; and as the atmospheric pressure is removed, steam rises, and the water from the milk disappears at a much lower temperature than in an ordinary vessel. When the water has been driven off, and the milk has consequently thickened sufficiently, it is drawn off and soldered down in tins.

The substitution of this preserved milk for that which comes more or less fresh from the cow is the only innovation that has taken place in the general features of the country trade probably ever since it was a trade. In large towns, however, a complete revolution has taken place, more especially in London—a revolution complete, that is to say, as far as it has gone. Instead of the primeval plan of bringing the cow wherever she may be wanted, and supplementing the supply, whenever it may happen to be unequal to the demand, by calling in the aid of the pump, railways have rendered it practicable to keep

the cow wherever it may be most expedient to do so, and telegraphs have put it in the power of our purveyors to supplement a deficient supply from one source by making an extra demand on another. A stringent law for the suppression of all forms of adulteration, the cattle plague, which some fifteen years ago swept off so many of our herds and cleared out so many urban cowsheds, and the facilities of railways and telegraphs, have between them called into existence some of the most remarkable organisations of modern commerce.

We shall confine our attention chiefly to facts in connection with the London milk trade, not because they are exactly peculiar to London, but because whatever there may be of interest in the trade elsewhere is well represented and completely illustrated by the metropolitan trade.

First, however, a few words as to the extent of the trade generally. It is exceedingly difficult to arrive at any very satisfactory conclusion as to the quantity of milk consumed throughout the country. The Board of Trade has not as yet been able to see its way to any thoroughly reliable estimate of the milk brought even into London. A few years ago, however, a gentleman laid before the Society of Arts statistics from which it seems possible to deduce a very fair approximation to an accurate estimate either with regard to London or the country generally. He found, on diligent inquiry, a few towns in which it was possible to state precisely the number of inhabitants, the number of cows kept in it, and the quantity of milk brought in from the neighbourhood. It appeared from a calculation based on these facts that about one-fifth of a pint daily was the quantity of milk consumed by every person on the average. The standard for London, reckoned in the same way, showed a somewhat lower quantity, but probably it would be approximately correct to take this one-fifth of a pint as the milk consumed every day by the population generally. Now the population of England alone about the middle of 1871 was estimated to be nearly 23,000,000, let us say 22,500,000. At the rate specified, this number of people will consume 562,500 gallons a day, or in a year of 365 days nearly 206,000,000 of gallons. Now it has been computed that about 530 gallons a year may be reckoned as the milk yield of a cow, on an average—that is to say, taking the cows on a large dairy farm, that is somewhere about what they may be expected to yield on average of them all. According to this it would appear that over 387,000 cows would be requisite to afford such a supply, and that, it should be remembered, at a time when, as it has been alleged, about a third part of all our "milk" was really water. Taking, however, 387,000 cows, which supplied England alone with milk at a time when its population was considerably less than it is now, and considering what labour, organisation, and cost are involved in the management and milking of them, the washing and cleansing of utensils, and especially in the distribution of their produce to almost every house in the land, it is very evident that the milk trade is one of enormous magnitude and importance.

The importance of the trade as regards the health and well-being of the people at large it is not necessary here to dwell upon. It has been stated, and apparently on very good ground, that a fresh and an abundant supply of milk for the young is really a more important matter for the health and strength

of any population than an abundant supply of meat for the adults. We have met, also, with this rather startling assertion by a medical authority—that if it were desired to produce by artificial means a fluid that should have a peculiar capability of absorbing atmospheric impurity, it would be impossible to devise anything better than milk. It has been stated again and again that pure milk contained in perfectly clean vessels, if exposed to impure air, will become contaminated to a degree that may render it little short of poisonous. Yet only a few years back it was computed that 24,000 cows were fed in London. Many of them were kept in the filthiest of slums; the milk was allowed to stand in the close and poison-laden air of the cow-houses; it was contained in vessels which there were no adequate means of cleansing, and very often diluted with water in itself sufficiently foul to breed pestilence.

Well, we have changed all that. The cattle-plague swept out many of the metropolitan cowsheds, and the animals have never been replaced. Public attention was directed to our milk supply, and the filthy holes from which much of it was drawn. Then came one or two powerful companies for bringing milk into London from the country, and, finally, an "order in council" regulating all dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops in England, Wales, and Scotland. There are now from 12,000 to 15,000 cows in London, all under constant and rigid supervision, and many of them housed and tended in a manner that might well make country bovine cousins low with bated breath if they could come and see a little of London life. The Metropolitan Board of Works sees to it that every cow has proper air-space and ventilation, and lighting and drainage, a good water supply, and clean troughs. All offensive litter must be cleared away at least twice a day, and every cowshed must be lined to a height of at least five feet from the floor with "some hard, smooth, and impervious material," so as to absorb no filth, and to admit of thorough cleansing. Many cowkeepers have set up in London sheds which for order, convenience, health, and cleanliness, are greatly superior to the ordinary cowhouse of the farm in the country. Of course London cows have to put up with London air, like the rest of us: and there are some other advantages of the country that cannot be enjoyed in town. We may, however, congratulate ourselves that the horrible old style of London cowsheds—very often the cellar of a dwelling-house—has now been utterly abolished, and upon the whole, town and country milk are pretty much on a par.

Still, even those of us who know this as a fact, and who perchance know that the "country farmhouse" and its appurtenances are not all that poets and painters would have us believe, have at least a sentimental preference for country milk. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was found easy to float successfully more than one large company formed for the purpose of superseding town-kept cows altogether, and bringing fresh milk right away from pasture lands at a distance. We have before us particulars of one or two of these companies, which may now be regarded as representing all that is most thorough and efficient in the trade we are considering.

As it has been intimated, it is not easy to obtain statistics of all the milk that is poured into London about four o'clock every morning, and again about one in the afternoon. It comes up, as most people

are aware, in churns, and the railway companies keep account of these churns only so far as they have to charge for them. There are, however, many farmers who engage trucks, in which they convey all their consignments of milk, whatever the quantity may be, much or little. The Board of Trade has found this a great difficulty in the preparation of accurate statistics. We may perhaps be able, however, to arrive at an approximate idea on the subject by a little calculation based on figures already given. We have seen that something about one-fifth of a pint a day per head of the population is about the consumption of milk in London. Now London, in the Registrar General's sense of the word, contained last census in round numbers 3,251,000 people. At a fifth of a pint for each such a population would require 81,275 gallons of milk a day. From this we have to take the supply afforded by the 12,000 to 15,000 cows in London—say 13,500 cows, giving a gallon and a half a day. This will be 20,250 gallons, and taking this from 81,275 gallons, will leave 61,025 gallons as the daily influx of milk from country pastures. The actual quantity is no doubt greater, because population has increased since the last census, and also because, as we have said, a few years ago—when that estimate of a fifth of a pint per head was made—about a third of what went under the name of milk was really water. If we add about one-tenth for increase of population, and about a third for increase of the actual milk in every gallon, we shall get just upon 90,000 gallons of milk daily from country cows for the supply of London. We shall more easily realise what this quantity is if we look at it in some such way as this. Put into pails of three gallons each and carried into London by milkmen, one man to each pail, it would take 30,000 men to carry it; and if they came all in a row with one yard to each man, the line would extend over seventeen miles.

There would, perhaps, be nothing very remarkable in the bringing into London of such a quantity of fluid as this daily if it were such a fluid as sea-water, or beer, or anything else that would keep, but to bring in 90,000 gallons of milk a day, and much of it from distant counties, and in all kinds of weather, and to distribute the vast bulk of it in "ha'porths" and "pen'orths" all over London before it can have time to turn sour, is a task demanding very careful organisation and management. One company alone, in London, make 11,000 calls at houses every day—that is to say, they supply regularly 5,000 houses twice a day, and make another 1,000 calls in various other ways. They have forty horses and mules continually in employ and 186 workpeople. Every night they find themselves with some 5,000 pans and pails to cleanse, and it is now very well understood that this cleansing must be something very different from the rinse round that old-fashioned London dairymen were satisfied with, if the milk put into them is to be served sweet and wholesome. All the largest and best managed London dairies now have a regular system of scalding their utensils by steam. It is well known that the smallest particle of sour milk adhering to the inside of a vessel will act upon any fresh milk poured into it very much as a particle of yeast would act on a barrel of beer; it will speedily impart its acidity to the whole of it, and if, as it has not unfrequently been found, it should chance to be a particle of milk that has been polluted by disease of a zymotic kind, it may be the germ of fever for a whole neighbourhood.

By steaming all utensils in which milk has been contained such possibilities are effectually guarded against, and this is always done now in the largest dairies. The company just alluded to have two six-horse-power boilers, and a huge hot-water tank with all sorts of jets and douches convenient for thoroughly purifying all their vessels. All such appliances, however, are after all only the more obviously necessary features of a milk supply that is to be altogether above suspicion of adulteration and impurity. It would be of little use scrupulously scalding out tins and pails if the milk as it comes from the distant farm were not pure. Now this company draws its supplies from some eighty or ninety farms and about 5,000 cows. The farms, unless special precautions were taken, might be filthy and ill-managed; with bad housing, bad water supply, pestilential air, and consequently unhealthy cows and unwholesome milk.

Before a contract is made with any farmer, therefore, his farm has to be rigidly inspected and all his arrangements approved, a plan of his premises, with drainage, water supply, and all other particulars, must be lodged with the company, and frequent visits are made by their officers to ensure that approved arrangements are permanently maintained. Besides all this, the company stipulates that in the event of any kind of contagious disease appearing on a farm from which they are drawing milk, immediate information of it shall be given to them. They undertake that the farmer shall incur no loss by making it known to them, but they require him to enter into a bond to forfeit a hundred pounds should he neglect to do so.

There are two deliveries, one during the night, and one about the middle of the day—the milk of the company whose arrangements we are considering arriving at Paddington from stations all down the Great Western line as far as Gloucestershire. The company's vans are awaiting its arrival, and immediately carry it off to headquarters, where it is passed through fine strainers into churns for delivery. From each of these churns a sample is taken from the tap at the bottom of it, after the lid has been sealed, and the sample is then immediately tested with the thermometer and lactometer, and the specific gravity of the fluid is entered on the books. It is then allowed to stand for twelve hours in a test tube, and the thickness of cream that has accumulated is also registered. These tests are of course to insure that the milk is genuine and unadulterated as it comes from the farm. But even when it has left the company's premises pure and unadulterated, there is still an obvious possibility of its being tampered with before it reaches the customer. The milk-carriers may do a little watering on their own account. If they only do this to the extent of a quart a day, they may do a little independent business, and add two or three shillings a week to their income. To guard against this, inspectors are always on their heels, and may at any moment take samples from their cans, and careful analyses are made, besides which they are of course liable to meet at any moment the Government inspectors, who may also take samples for analysis. This one trading organisation alone spends upwards of £800 a year in fees for analyses, engineering, inspection, and other such expenses incurred in testing their milk and guarding against adulteration and pollution; and there are other establishments in London, in which very much the same precautions are taken, and in all of them, large or small, if dirty,

unwholesome conditions prevail, or if dishonest tricks are resorted to, it can only be by temporarily escaping the stringent provisions which recent legislation has made for the regulation of the trade.

The improvement in the statistics as to mortality among children, in London and other great towns, is doubtless due in part to the improved supply of milk.

BOARD SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND.

AT a time when School Board expenditure in England, and especially in London, is exciting a good deal of warm controversy, some account of the School Board system in Scotland—of its operations, its results, and its cost—may not be uninteresting. The facts were given in the "Times," and have been endorsed by one of the highest educational authorities in Edinburgh.

An important difference between the educational system of Scotland and that of England has to be noted at the outset. In England the Act of 1870 established the Board system avowedly as a supplement to the voluntary or denominational system. Even in London, where a School Board was ordered to be formed by the Act, it was understood that voluntary agencies would continue their operations not only as before, but also, as has turned out to be the case, with increased activity. In Scotland, on the other hand, the Act of 1872 made the establishment of School Boards universal and compulsory. In Scotland, as in England, there were voluntary schools, but the Act provided for the absorption of these into the national or public school system—a process which has already been effected to a very large extent. The old parochial schools, which were practically Church schools, were statutorily constituted public schools, and formed the germ of the new system. Most of the other denominational schools—both those owned by the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland and those owned by Dissenters—have now been transferred to School Boards. According to the recent returns, there are in Scotland 2,998 elementary day schools in receipt of the parliamentary grant. Of these 2,334 are public, or School Board schools; while only 664 are voluntary, or denominational. Hence it follows that the rivalry between the Board system and the voluntary system, which in England forms the most striking feature and the most embarrassing circumstance in the educational situation, has in Scotland no place. This fact may be supposed to make any comparison between Scotland and England quite inappropriate. It certainly does so in one respect; but in another respect it makes the comparison, or, at least, the contrast, all the more striking. Scotchmen are apt to say that this very circumstance of the exclusion of denominational rivalry demonstrates the superiority of the Scotch system. England, they argue, is now suffering from the consequences of the half-hearted and halting compromise of 1870. If Mr. Forster's Act had dealt as boldly with the position in England as Lord Young's Act did with that in Scotland, such bitter controversies and heartburnings as have agitated England during the last six years, and as have disturbed Parliament during the present session,

would never have been heard of. Whether it would have been possible to carry a measure for England as thoroughgoing as the Scotch Act may be very doubtful; but that is not a condition which Scotchmen feel called on to take into account. They look only to results. They see in Scotland uniformity, general agreement, and co-operation, and undoubted success; they see in England diversity, general rivalry, and recrimination, and claims of success disputed or denied. Is it surprising, then, that their opinions on the matter are strong, or that their preference for their own system is decided?

In the course of the discussions, both in and out of Parliament, on the School Board system, earnest warnings have repeatedly been uttered against the possible extension of that system in England on the ground of its costliness. Irksome as the school-rate is said to be at present, it is argued that if School Boards became universal the burden would become intolerable. It may not be amiss to remind those who speak thus that Scotland is a trustworthy example of a country in which the School Board system is universal and compulsory without producing any of the terrible consequences predicted by the speakers referred to. The people are, on the whole, poor, and they are not specially patient under excessive taxation, although they have their full share of it to bear; yet they do not, except in a few remote and thinly-peopled districts, complain of the school-rate, much less do they denounce it as an intolerable burden. On the contrary, they are proud of the system which gives them property in, as well as the management of, the public schools of the country, and they are quite willing to pay for them.

It is true that at the last election of School Boards a demand for greater economy was raised in several prominent towns; but this demand was based, not on complaints of the amount of the school-tax, but on objections to the manner in which the money had been spent. Many persons think that more money than was necessary has been spent on fine buildings and sumptuous furnishings, but these persons would have made no complaint had the money been spent on additional teaching power, or on anything that would really improve the instruction given in the schools. It is also true that in the remote Highlands, and in the islands of the north and west, the school-rate is in many parishes vexatiously large; but the burden in these cases falls mainly on the proprietors, who, on the whole, submit to the infliction with wonderful resignation. The high rate in these places is due to the sparse population and to the low rateable value of the land. No matter how thinly peopled a parish may be, a School Board must be elected; and no matter how few the children, schools must be provided for them within reasonable distances of their dwellings. Hence it often happens that, though the children of school age number only four or five hundred, five or six schools require to be provided for their accommodation. In Shetland, for example, the average rate for 12 parishes is 11·94d.; in Orkney it is 8·20d.; in Caithness it is 9·67d.; in Sutherland, 9·53d.; in Ross, 8·03d.; and in Nairn, 10·58d. When the rate of assessment in separate parishes is looked at the results are still more remarkable. There are four parishes in Shetland in which the rates are respectively 1s., 1s. 6d., 2s., and 3s. 4d. in the pound. In presence of such imposts, the complaints of the Londoners over a rate of 5d. in the pound cannot be expected, in Scotland at

least, to command much sympathy. It is more to the point, however, to observe that such cases are quite exceptional even in Scotland, and that it is very doubtful whether they would be paralleled in England if the School Board system were to be made universal there to-morrow. But much the most important conclusion yielded by the Scotch statistics is, that the school-rate is lowest in the most populous districts. In Glasgow, which is to Scotland what London is to England, the rate is only 3d.; in Edinburgh it is 3½d.; in Dundee it is 3½d.; in Aberdeen it is 4½d. For the whole of Scotland the average rate is only 4·36d., which is, to a fraction, the same as the average rate in London for the last three years.

The Wild Geranium.



CROSS yonder hill top,
where fleeting cloud-
shadows

Roll over scant herbage
that grows on its crest,
A wandering bird from
the low lying meadows
Flew swiftly at eve to his
far away nest.

Swiftly and surely, the
darkness forestalling,

His mate and his young one
already were calling;

He had gathered them food, and a
tiny seed falling,

Thus found on the upland a wild place
of rest.

With shelter and soil that would foster and nourish,
A beautiful flow'r might have sprung from the grain;
Transplanted so suddenly how could it flourish,
Exposed to the sunshine, the wind, and the rain?
Down a dry crevice it sank in a minute,
But life is well worthy an effort to win it,
And the poor little seed, or the germ that was in it,
Strove hard for existence, nor struggled in vain.

Here then—although winter, unconquered and hardy,
Oft rallied his forces to do or to die,
And blustered so long that the springtime, grown
tardy,

But climbed to his stronghold when summer was nigh,
Braving the tempest that threatened it danger,
Ready to gladden some overspent ranger,
Like the face of a friend in the land of the stranger—
The sweet wild geranium looked up at the sky.

Ah! who of us all would have thought that it
mattered

Where fell the small seed from the beak of the bird?
And who would believe what a blessing is scattered—
Aye, times out of number—by one kindly word?

A whisper of counsel, a stray admonition,
May fall on rough places to bloom in contrition,
And while God is preparing a gracious fruition,
We fancy it wasted or even unheard.

The seedling both touched the bare hill top with
beauty,
And yielded the wayfarer cheering delight;
A word may enliven some stern path of duty,
A smile make some sorrowful countenance bright.
Good words, loving smiles, on our dear ones we
shower;
Oh! scatter them wider, for great is their power,
They are seeds that may bear to the desert a flower
As fair as the blossom that grew on the height.

S. E. G.

Varieties.

CUSTOMARY RELIGION.—There is a story told of an Eton boy who for taking his prayer-book with him to chapel on Saturday when it was not the custom, was kicked downstairs by his schoolfellows for a saint, and who for not taking it on Sundays when it was the custom, was kicked downstairs for an atheist.

JEWISH CHARITY.—The Head Mistress of the Jews' Infant School, Commercial Street, E., provides twice a week nourishing dinners for 600 of her little charges, the number attending the school being about 700. Of these the parents of only about 100 can afford to give their children dinners at home. What is to be done? She submits her cause to some of the supporters of the school. Voluntary subscriptions are readily sent to her; in many families of fair incomes the children keep a box into which are dropped the odd pence and threepenny-pieces which might otherwise be carelessly spent, and send their collections once or twice a year for the infant school dinners. The children who partake of the dinner pay a halfpenny each time. They do not then feel it the "bread of charity;" those too poor to pay are not left without their meal. The meals consist of soup one day, a dish from the oven on another, or an Irish stew. The soup for 600 children is composed of—Soup—vegetables, cost 8s. 6d.; potatoes, 4s. 9d.; rice, 10s. 6d.; 75lb. meat, £2 16s. 3d.; total, £4. The dish from the oven thus:—Potatoes, 15s. 6d.; onions, 2s. 6d.; rice, 10s. 6d.; baking (cost of), 5s.; 75lb. meat, £2 16s. 3d.; total, £4 9s. 9d. The vessels for cooking have of course to be purchased at the outset, together with basins and spoons. The distribution of the meal occupies about one hour and a half, and this the teachers, under the direction of the head mistress, accomplish. There is no staff for cooking, as the butcher who supplies the meat, aided by his willing wife, makes the soup and provides all the ingredients. She sends it to the school by her own servants, and makes no charge for fuel. A little trouble can accomplish more than lavish expenditure. This school is in excellent working order, and is under Government supervision. It is situated in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in London. The worthy head mistress knows every pupil and the circumstances of the parents; there can be no imposition. It is not to be supposed that the ratepayers would feed the pupils of the numerous schools, but a little voluntary taxation might accomplish a great deal.

THE MOON AND THE WEATHER.—It is a popular belief that weather alters, for the worse or the better, with the changes of the moon. If there were any truth in this notion, it would be easily established by the accurate observations of modern science. Mr. Glaisher, of the Royal Observatory, examined the records kept there during twenty years, and he says, "Changes of weather have been as frequent at every age of the moon as when she has been seven, fourteen, twenty-one, or twenty-eight days old; therefore she cannot have had the slightest influence over any of them." Other scientific observers have found changes as marked about the first and third quarters as about new or full moon. In fact, there is no constant influence exerted either in the weight or moisture or other quality of the atmosphere on which weather depends. The notion of the moon's influence is a relic of superstition which attributed to

the heavenly bodies a powerful influence over human affairs. The belief is held chiefly by farmers, who, having heard of changes at the new or full moon, are very keen to expect them. When the coincidence occurs, as it must do occasionally by the law of probabilities, their belief is strengthened. But they do not note with equal certainty the more frequent occasions when the coincidence fails; and when the season is favourable, the subject probably passes without observation of any kind. The change of the moon being continuous, it is *a priori* improbable that an unusual influence should be exerted at the arbitrary periods of the full and new moon, or the quarters, and science gives no support to the popular notion.

NEW ZEALAND.—To a person content to live frugally and possessing a knowledge of agriculture, New Zealand is a paradise compared with anything he can hope for at home. He may own instead of rent the land he farms; he may revel in all the enjoyments of English country life; he may educate his children with a knowledge that bright careers will be within reach of his boys, and good husbands forthcoming for his girls.—*Sir Julius Vogel.*

AMERICAN GUESTS AND ENGLISH HOSTS.—The English are always ready enough to grant precedence to distinguished foreigners without waiting for them to arrogate it. Rogers used to relate that when Cooper, the American novelist, dined at Holland House with several persons of rank who went out before him, he showed strong signs of annoyance and maintained a sulky silence during the whole evening. He was engaged to dine the day following at Spencer House, whither Rogers repaired at an early hour to make the noble host and hostess aware that, if they wished their guest to play the lion, they must be content to humour his susceptibilities. The Duke of Sussex was of the party; but when dinner was announced, Lady Spencer advanced to Cooper and requested him to give her his arm, saying that in her estimate genius took precedence of royalty. He was delighted, talked during the whole dinner with more than his usual animation, and told Rogers when they came away together that Lady Spencer was the best-bred woman he had ever met. At all the English houses where General Grant was received it seems to have been understood that his claim of precedence was to be allowed without question, and it is satisfactory to find that he duly appreciated the uniform courtesy and cordiality of his hosts. Giving other countries the preference as to climate, the General says:—"England was of course the most enjoyable part of the trip in other respects. It was the next thing to going home. Scotland was especially interesting. I enjoyed my visit to Dunrobin, where the Duke of Sutherland lives, and also to Inverary, the home of the Duke of Argyll. I was prepared to like the Duke of Argyll from his course in our war, and I left Inverary with the greatest respect and esteem for him. I met no man in Europe who inspired a higher feeling than the duke. I received nothing but the utmost kindness from every Englishman, from the head of the nation down. Next to my own country there is none I love so much as England. Some of the newspapers at home invented a story to the effect that the Prince of Wales had been rude to me. It was a pure invention. I cannot conceive of the Prince of Wales being rude to any man. I met him on several occasions in London and Paris, and he treated me with the utmost courtesy and kindness."—*The Quarterly Review*: "Around the World with General Grant."

ANECDOTE OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.—In 1831, at the time when popular feeling was strong against the Duke of Wellington on account of his opposition to Earl Grey's Reform Bill, Mr. Gleig communicated to the duke a report of threatened violence at Dover. The Duke replied:—"My Dear Mr. Gleig, I received only yesterday morning, on my road to London, your letter of the 4th instant. It is my duty to go to Walmer and to Dover, and I am not to be prevented from doing so either by threats of insult or injury. What I always do upon these cases is to give information to the magistrate. It is his duty to protect all his Majesty's subjects, particularly those acting under the king's authority, and even to take precautions for their protection if necessary. It is my opinion that these secret informants who will not, and possibly dare not, come forward with their information, do more harm than good. There is a perpetual gossip going on in the public-houses upon all sorts of plans of mischief. Is it quite certain that these informants do not suggest the very plans of which they give information? I intended to be at Walmer this night, but a letter which I sent to announce my arrival did not go. I shall therefore set off to-morrow morning, and I hope to arrive early in the day. I suspect that those who will attack me on the road will come rather the worst out of the contest if there should be one. Ever yours sincerely, WELLINGTON."